



COMMITTEE ON

**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY**

REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

## **Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas**

### *Research and Technology Subcommittee Hearing*

“Building Regional Innovation Economies”

June 9, 2021

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Thank you, Chairwoman Stevens for holding today’s subcommittee hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for your participation today. I look forward to hearing your expert testimonies on how we can support the development of regional innovation economies, as innovation is a propelling force for economic growth and prosperity.

I would especially like to thank Secretary Pollard for taking the time to speak with us today about Oklahoma’s Science and Innovation Strategic Plan. This commitment to investing in innovation will grow our state’s economy, provide Oklahomans with high-paying jobs, and advance our competitiveness.

Oklahoma has significant existing infrastructure in three key technology areas: aerospace and autonomous systems; biotechnology and life sciences; and energy diversification. Further investments in these key areas would advance Oklahoma’s innovation and potential to become a Top 10 State for science and technology. The Oklahoma City Innovation District, Tulsa Innovation Labs, OSU Discovery Building, and the Oklahoma Pandemic Center for Innovation and Excellence are also examples of Oklahoma’s commitment to lead in innovation.

Despite these investments, there are a few challenges affecting Oklahoma’s ability to develop an innovation economy. Oklahoma ranks last for state investment in human capital, and 36<sup>th</sup> place in total R&D expenditures. It is important to recognize these challenges to better understand how Oklahoma can leverage state, local, and federal government resources along with academia and industry to overcome these challenges.

While these challenges are specific to Oklahoma, the fact is that every community has their own unique set of goals and challenges for developing their research industry infrastructure. As my colleague noted earlier, there are multiple proposals from the Administration and Members of Congress on developing regional innovation economies, and I’m happy to see that this Committee is using this hearing as an opportunity to explore these proposals, along with new ideas to foster regional innovation.

As we consider these proposals, I want to make sure we keep in mind the flexibility required to ensure they work across urban and rural areas, coastal and midwestern states, big and small communities, and everything in between. For instance, while current proposals consider regional diversity when issuing awards, more often than not many rural communities, like those in my district, struggle to compete for funding since the matching requirements are beyond the resources available within these communities. I hope today we can learn how all communities can have the opportunity to become leaders in regional innovation, and help solve some of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's most challenging problems.

Thank you, and I yield back.